SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT AND REPORTING

# ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL JURISDICTION 2004-2007 EDUCATION PLANS

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**This document is intended primarily for:**
System and School Administrators
School Board Trustees
Alberta Education Executive Team and Managers

**And may be of interest to:**
Teachers
Parents
Community members

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alberta Education analyzes school jurisdiction education plans annually to support continuous improvement in the K-12 learning system, as one way of being informed about key issues identified by school boards, and to reinforce the accountability relationship between Ministry and school board planning in support of systemic continuous improvement. This report documents the continuing implementation of an articulated planning model. Key insights based on this report include the following:

1. Compliance statistics indicate a substantial improvement over the 2003-06 education planning process with only one of 53 measures and strategies falling below 95% compared to eight such measures in the previous report (p. 2/3).
2. Jurisdiction education plans and results reports are becoming more useful documents for sharing success stories in fostering improvement and stimulating innovation among school jurisdictions, especially when addressing challenges facing "priority" schools (p. 6/7).
3. Jurisdictions are increasingly using reviews of achievement data to determine effective instructional methods for FNMI students. This demonstrates a positive growth in data driven decision making related to accountability functioning (p. 11).
4. In discussing partnering opportunities with the Ministry, jurisdictions recommended more reciprocal information flows to both identify current trends in the education system for establishing priorities as well as for informing realistic stages of plan implementation (p.19/20).
5. While the Ministry was complimented for choosing to address the ACOL average class size recommendation "in such a direct way," the jurisdictions stressed the need for continuous clear communication to parents and the public that the Class Size Initiative relates to a *jurisdiction* class size average, rather than an individual school average or a grade-by-grade maximum, and recommended clarification of the Ministry's strategies for following up the implementation and applications of the class size initiative (p. 21).

This is the last year school jurisdictions will be receiving summary reports focusing exclusively on analysis of education plans. Henceforth, jurisdictions will receive one annual Accountability Pillar report containing information on analysis of jurisdictions plans and annual reports that they can use to foster continuous improvement. A transitional report, reflecting the phased implementation of the new accountability pillar, will be provided to jurisdictions in early 2007 based on the 2005-08 education plans and related 2005-06 AERRs. Subsequent summaries of jurisdiction plans and reports will be produced in the spring of each succeeding year.

This new method of summarizing school board plans and reports will also help jurisdictions:

- develop effective strategies that foster high achievement and/or improvement in Accountability Pillar measures;
- research factors affecting low or declining performance in Accountability Pillar measures;
- generate recommendations to address atypically low or high performance patterns.

## INTRODUCTION

Alberta Education reads and summarizes school jurisdiction education plans to support continuous improvement in the K-12 learning system, as one way of being informed about key issues identified by school boards, and to reinforce the accountability relationship between Ministry and school board planning in support of systemic continuous improvement. This report is part of a series of summary reports on school board planning that over time document the operation and evolution of the strategic planning aspects of the Alberta model of accountability for basic education. The primary audiences for this report are school and system-based administrators, school board trustees, and Alberta Education's Executive Team and managers, but the document is also a component in the public reporting aspect of the accountability model for basic education.

## METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The methods used in analyzing school board education plans involve Alberta Education staff creating a Summary and Review form for jurisdiction plans. This form is unique for each planning cycle in order to capture local planning contexts in relation to the current *Guide for School Board Planning and Results Reporting*. Field Services staff read each education plan and highlight key aspects in a Summary and Review Form. These forms are then reviewed and verified through meetings with superintendents by Field Services managers. The System Improvement and Reporting Division completes both quantitative and qualitative content-analysis of the verified Summary and Review Forms, noting key patterns and insights for the planning process. These findings are summarized in this report that rolls up this information for the 62 operating school board 2004-2007 education plans.

Frequencies in this report represent either a percent of a predetermined total (e.g. percent of jurisdictions including a specific outcome or measure in their plans) or responses to open-ended questions. Open-ended response frequencies represent input volunteered by jurisdiction staff in response to a general question as opposed to selecting items from a pre-designed list of possible answers. In these cases the numbers and percentages reported should be interpreted as generally illustrative of the relative importance of the items and not reflective of a scientific survey of ranked importance of the item(s).

Two jurisdictions' reviews submitted to Alberta Education were missing questions. The questions concerned desired supports from Alberta Education and desired information from other jurisdictions. Because it was not known if the absences were a result of a technical error or the jurisdictions choosing not to answer the questions, the analyses of these questions are based on a valid response of 60 or 61 (depending on how many times the question went unanswered), rather than 62 jurisdictions. The changes to the number of jurisdictions are noted on the tables in which they occur (Tables 11 and 12). In a few cases, the jurisdictions left questions blank or indicated that they had no comment. In these cases, the jurisdictions were included in the valid response and the analyses were completed using all 62 jurisdictions.

## EDUCATION PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Part A of the review template contains a list of required elements for the 2004-2007 School Board Education Plans. Jurisdiction Three-Year Education Plans were evaluated to determine which requirements were included. Of 53 required elements, jurisdiction compliance was 100% for 19 measures or strategies and compliance on 33 of the measures and strategies fell between 95 and 100 percent. Only one requirement proved somewhat problematic by falling slightly below the 95% cut-off. Only 58 (93.55%) jurisdictions included "*Board's guiding principles for financial planning*" as part of their budget highlights. Overall, this is a substantial improvement over the 2003-2006 planning process when eight measures or strategies had compliance rates below 95%.

One area that jurisdictions could focus on for future planning cycles is the inclusion of local goals and measures. These are not required, and were therefore not included in the aforementioned calculations. However, the 2004-2007 Summary and Review Template provides the opportunity for jurisdictions to comment on local goals, outcomes and priorities. Inclusion of strategies and measures for local goals, outcomes and priorities was very low. Of the ten possible local strategies and measures, inclusion in the Three Year Education Plans ranged between 37% and 63%. Some examples of local goals, outcomes and priorities include, but are not limited to:

- "Flexibility in access and delivery of programs for all learners."
- "Clearly articulated roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in community ownership of education."
- "Staff will deliver culturally relevant programming in a culturally sensitive manner."
- "Students have information technology skills needed for K-12 learning, work and post-secondary studies."
- "Lower drop-out rates at the junior/senior high level … by 2% annually over the next three years."
- "Identify meaningful role to be played by individuals and business partnerships."
- Jurisdiction "will actively seek partnership agreements with other agencies designed to address achievement."
- "Establish processes to measure responsiveness and responsibility of the jurisdiction."
- "All schools are safe and caring."
- "Improved student learning in multi-ability classrooms by supporting teachers to differentiate instruction."

One key purpose of the accountability framework for basic learning is to ensure a degree of alignment between Alberta Education's Business Plan and school jurisdiction education plans. Consequently, the number and percentage of planning requirements in each jurisdiction's 2004-2007 3YEP were tabulated and are summarized in the following table (Table 1). For some boards, not all measures and strategies apply (for example, they have very low or nil numbers of FNMI and/or special populations of students). In these cases, the maximum number of required measures/strategies may be between 49 and 53[1]. Where this is the case, the base number is less than 53 and the percentage has been adjusted to reflect the appropriate base value. The adjusted average percent of alignment with the overall requirements for jurisdiction 2004-07 education plans is 98.45%, with a standard deviation of 6.68%.

[1] See Appendix 1 for a comprehensive list of required elements.

*Table 1 – Total Accountability Performance Measures Reported by Jurisdiction**

| ZONE | Jurisdictions | Total Score Max=53 | ZONE | Jurisdictions | Total Score Max=53 | ZONE | Jurisdictions | Total Score Max=53 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Fort Vermilion | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | St. Albert Protestant | 53/53 100% | 5 | Christ the Redeemer | 51/51 100% |
| 1 | Peace River | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | St. Paul | 53/53 100% | 5 | Foothills | 53/53 100% |
| 1 | Northland | 52/52 100% | 2/3 | Elk Island Public | 53/53 100% | 5 | Prairie Land | 51/51 100% |
| 1 | Holy Family Catholic | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | Evergreen Catholic | 53/53 100% | 5 | Golden Hills | 53/53 100% |
| 1 | High Prairie | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | Lakeland Catholic | 53/53 100% | 5 | Rocky View | 53/53 100% |
| 1 | Grand Prairie Catholic | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | Living Waters | 53/53 100% | 6 | Medicine Hat Catholic | 44/51 86% |
| 1 | Grande Prairie Public | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | Northern Gateway | 51/53 96% | 6 | Medicine Hat Public | 53/53 100% |
| 1 | Peace Wapiti | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | St. Thomas Aquinas | 53/53 100% | 6 | Palliser | 53/53 100% |
| 2/3 | Elk Island Catholic | 53/53 100% | 2/3 | Sturgeon | 53/53 100% | 6 | Prairie Rose | 53/53 100% |
| 2/3 | Black Gold | 51/51 100% | 2/3 | Northern Lights | 53/53 100% | 6 | Westwind | 53/53 100% |
| 2/3 | Buffalo Trial | 53/53 100% | 4 | Wetaskiwin | 53/53 100% | 6 | Grasslands | 52/52 100% |
| 2/3 | East Central AB Catholic | 51/51 100% | 4 | Battle River | 53/53 100% | 6 | Holy Spirit | 53/53 100% |
| 2/3 | Edmonton Catholic | 53/53 100% | 4 | Chinook's Edge | 53/53 100% | 6 | Horizon | 53/53 100% |
| 2/3 | Edmonton Public | 53/53 100% | 4 | Clearview | 51/51 100% | 6 | Lethbridge Public | 53/53 100% |
| 2/3 | Aspen View | 27/52 52% | 4 | Red Deer Public | 53/53 100% | 6 | Livingstone Range | 43/53 81% |
| 2/3 | Fort McMurray Catholic | 53/53 100% | 4 | Red Deer Catholic | 53/53 100% | F | East Central | 50/51 100% |
| 2/3 | Fort McMurray Public. | 53/53 100% | 4 | Wild Rose | 53/53 100% | F | Southern Public | 48/49 98% |
| 2/3 | Grande Yellowhead | 53/53 100% | 4 | Wolf Creek | 53/53 100% | F | Gr. Southern Catholic | 51/51 100% |
| 2/3 | Gr. St. Albert Catholic | 53/53 100% | 5 | Canadian Rockies | 53/53 100% | F | Northwest | 50/51 98% |
| 2/3 | Parkland | 53/53 100% | 5 | Calgary Catholic | 53/53 100% | F | North Central | 48/51 94% |
| 2/3 | Pembina Hills | 53/53 100% | 5 | Calgary Public | 53/53 100% | | | |

- Total measures calculation excludes reporting on local goals and "other" Priority Areas for Improvement. Some jurisdictions indicated that strategies/measures (e.g. for FNMI and/or special populations of students) are not applicable to them and if this is the case, the percentages have been adjusted to reflect this.

## FOCUSSED DISCUSSION

Whereas Part A of the 2004-2007 School Jurisdiction Three-Year Education Plan (3YEP) Summary and Review Template contained a checklist of required elements, Part B engaged jurisdictions in a focused discussion on topics of importance to the education system. Responses to this discussion section were answers to open-ended questions, and therefore frequencies tabulated from them represent input volunteered by jurisdiction staff as opposed to items selected from a checklist. As such, the numbers and percentages reported should only be interpreted as generally illustrative of the relative importance of the items to the jurisdictions.

## JURISDICTIONAL STRENGTHS

While the review of the 2003-2006 School Jurisdiction Education Plans asked respondents to comment on their jurisdiction's strengths in specific areas, the review of the 2004-2007 School Jurisdiction Education Plans left the question completely open-ended and asked respondents to describe the strengths of their jurisdiction without specifying areas on which they should comment. Different jurisdictions perceived different strengths. Responses are divided into the general categories of strengths in processes and standards, strengths in support systems or programs, and strengths in people or groups. The jurisdictions' strengths in processes and standards were commented on most frequently, followed by strengths in support systems or programs. Overall, the most commonly listed strengths were staff members (39%); professional development programs (34%); effective labour or working relationships (27%); and the AISI program (24%). The most commonly cited responses for each of the three categories are included in Table 2 below.

*Table 2 – Jurisdictional Strengths*

| Jurisdictional strengths | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| **Processes and Standards** | |
| • Effective labour or working relationships | 17 (27%) |
| • Improved/strong results on achievement tests | 12 (19%) |
| • High academic achievement levels | 11 (18%) |
| • Establishing and building relationships/links | 10 (16%) |
| • High/improved high school completion rates | 10 (16%) |
| • Focus is on improvement | 6 (10%) |
| • Team oriented | 6 (10%) |
| • Meeting class size targets | 6 (10%) |
| • Greater choice/selection/opportunities | 6 (10%) |
| • Effective policy development | 5 (8%) |
| • Accountability | 5 (8%) |
| • Size of jurisdictions/schools | 5 (8%) |
| • High satisfaction levels | 5 (8%) |
| • Good participation on achievement tests | 4 (6%) |
| • Equitable access to programs | 4 (6%) |
| • Data-driven system | 4 (6%) |
| • Innovation/challenging status quo/open to change | 4 (6%) |
| **Support Systems or Programs** | |
| • Professional development programs | 21 (34%) |
| • AISI program | 15 (24%) |
| • Special education programs | 12 (19%) |
| • Other unique programs specific to jurisdiction or schools | 12 (19%) |
| • Mentorship/leadership programs | 9 (15%) |
| • Effective teacher support programs | 7 (11%) |
| • Aboriginal-centered programs | 7 (11%) |
| • Diversity of programs | 6 (10%) |
| • Faith-based programs/supports | 6 (10%) |
| • Implementation of curriculum | 4 (6%) |
| **People and Groups** | |
| • Staff members | 24 (39%) |
| • The board | 12 (19%) |
| • Administrative team | 10 (16%) |
| • Teachers | 8 (13%) |
| • Professional Learning Communities | 7 (11%) |
| • The community | 5 (8%) |
| • Central office staff | 4 (6%) |
| • Parents | 4 (6%) |

## CHALLENGES

Jurisdictions were asked to describe challenges that they anticipate facing in the next three years and to review how their education plans address these challenges. While all jurisdictions were able to describe a multitude of challenges being faced, few commented on plans to address

these challenges. In the interest of conciseness, the jurisdictions' challenges were grouped according to the following significant themes, which are summarized in Table 3 below. Issues related to these challenges will be discussed in more detail in further subsections.

***Table 3: Significant Challenges Anticipated by Jurisdictions Over the Next Three Years***

| Challenges | Most Frequently Cited Examples | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|---|
| Funding | Inadequate funding, especially to meet the cost of operations, maintenance and utilities, as well as to cover salary increases | 40 (65%) |
| Special Needs | Increased number of special needs students; parental and community expectations | 29 (47%) |
| Infrastructure | Space/capital needs/facility pressure with reduced class sizes | 27 (44%) |
| Enrolment | Declining enrolment; (unexpected) enrolment fluxes | 25 (40%) |
| Achievement | Bolstering low achievement and school completion rates | 19 (31%) |
| New Initiatives | Difficulty finding time/space/resources to accommodate new initiatives; lack of guidance for implementation | 18 (29%) |
| Staffing | Impending retirements ("exodus"); succession planning; staff stress | 17 (27%) |
| Rural Schools | Difficulty recruiting and retaining staff; programming, especially in small schools. | 12 (19%) |
| FNMI | Achievement of FNMI students; meeting needs of FNMI population | 11 (18%) |
| Student Issues | Transitory student populations; difficulty with disrespectful students; diverse needs of students | 11 (18%) |
| Political | Labour union issues; local autonomy; possible annexation | 10 (16%) |
| Programming | Developing and implementing programs to meet everyone's needs | 10 (16%) |
| Technology | Evergreening; funding | 10 (16%) |
| Administrative | Time required for planning and reporting cycles; schools responsible for things outside normal scope (i.e. health) | 7 (11%) |
| Transportation | Costs; funding; time spent on busing excessive for many students | 7 (11%) |
| Staff Stress | Too many demands on teachers; excessive accountability requirements put too much strain on staff | 6 (10%) |
| PD | Developing and delivering effective PD | 5 (8%) |
| Leadership | Lack of future leaders; must develop leadership building capacity | 4 (6%) |
| Communication | Improving communication practices | 3 (5%) |

The following sections will address a subset of the above-mentioned challenges, namely:

- achievement;
- focusing resources to improve results (achievement);
- the class size initiative (new initiatives); and
- meeting FNMI needs.

## Achievement

### *Priority Schools*

Jurisdictions were asked to discuss previous years' strategies for working with priority schools and the results of those strategies, as well as plans/school strategies to foster improvement in these schools. While jurisdictions were given an opportunity to comment on both past and future plans for priority schools, most responded in a generic manner on process matters, neither

indicating whether their future strategies differed from their past ones, nor whether their past efforts had been met with success. The most common responses are summarized in Table 4 below.

As might have been expected, a majority of jurisdictions (52%) indicated that they rely on an analysis of Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) and Diploma Exam (DIP) results to plan for improvement in priority schools. A further 17 (27%) specified that schools are required to submit improvement plans that contain priority areas for improvement strategies and targets based on the aforementioned analysis of achievement results. Fifteen jurisdictions (24%) mentioned that improvement planning is a highly collaborative endeavour, with meetings and discussions (of results) held between the schools' representatives (i.e. principals, planning teams) and the school board, trustees, superintendents, school councils and/or central administrators.

Many jurisdictions gave contextually descriptive examples of their improvement efforts. Fifteen (24%) reported focusing on reducing the achievement gap between FNMI learners/"at risk students" and other students by implementing FNMI projects, targeted support systems, Individual Program Plans (IPPs), differentiated instruction and testing for early identification of special needs. In order to improve performance, thirteen jurisdictions (21%) reported hiring or using specialized staff such as consultants, results analysts, special education coordinators, multicultural facilitators, teaching assistants, career counselors and subject area specialists. Ten jurisdictions (16%) focused their AISI projects on fostering improvement in priority schools and another nine (15%) reported using professional development.

It is interesting to note that one jurisdiction reported success with the sharing of best practices across the division and that another jurisdiction requested information on best practices from other jurisdictions. The sharing of success stories in fostering improvement may be something that could stimulate innovation and be of benefit to jurisdictions in the future.

***Table 4: Strategies to Improve Performance in Priority Schools***

| Strategies for Improvement | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| Reliance on analysis of PAT and DIP results to inform improvement planning | 32 (52%) |
| Schools submit improvement plans that include priority areas for improvement | 17 (27%) |
| Collaborative process used to discuss results and plan for improvements | 15 (24%) |
| Focus on reducing the achievement gap between FNMI learners/"at risk students" and other students | 15 (24%) |
| Specialized staff hired/used | 13 (21%) |
| AISI projects developed to foster improvement | 10 (16%) |
| Professional Development | 9 (15%) |
| Focused attention on problematic subject areas | 8 (13%) |
| Implementation of Professional Learning Communities | 4 (6%) |
| Provide a planning template to all schools (results in exemplary improvement plans) | 3 (5%) |

## Focusing Resources

Jurisdictions were asked to discuss the key areas in which they are focusing resources to improve results. A wide variety of areas were mentioned, but few jurisdictions did more than list areas of importance, so little can be said about the details of how these priorities are being handled.

*Table 5: Key Areas in which Jurisdictions are Focusing Resources*

| Key Areas | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| (Early) Literacy and numeracy | 26 (42%) |
| Professional development | 26 (42%) |
| Meeting FNMI needs/improving FNMI achievement | 10 (16%) |
| Fostering professional learning communities | 10 (16%) |
| Reducing/maintaining class size | 9 (15%) |
| Differentiated instruction | 8 (13%) |
| Meeting staffing needs | 8 (13%) |
| Ensuring supports for special needs students | 8 (13%) |
| Technology (development, evergreening, purchase) | 8 (13%) |
| Leadership plan/development and support | 8 (13%) |
| Improving student achievement | 6 (10%) |
| Planning and reporting/accountability | 6 (10%) |
| Improving teacher understanding of assessments, student learning and strategies for teacher success | 6 (10%) |
| Analysis of results | 5 (8%) |

The two areas on which jurisdictions most reported focusing resources were improving student achievement in (early) "literacy and numeracy" and developing and implementing effective professional development. These were followed by focusing on FNMI needs and improving FNMI achievement, creating professional learning communities, and reducing/maintaining class size. Table 5 above summarizes the highlights of jurisdictions' responses.

## Class Size Initiative

Jurisdictions were given the opportunity to discuss their plans for the class size funding for the next three years, including a description of the actions and activities they would undertake to reach Alberta's Commission on Learning (ACOL) averages within their jurisdictions or, if those have already been attained, to provide additional support to the classroom. Jurisdiction responses fell into roughly three categories:
(1) comments on how prepared schools are to meet class size guidelines;
(2) comments on how the class size funding will be used;
(3) issues that have arisen in attempting to meet the class size recommendations.

***Preparedness to meet class size guidelines:***
Twenty-five of the 62 jurisdictions (40%) commented on their preparedness to meet class size guidelines within the three-year timeframe recommended by ACOL. Of those jurisdictions, ten indicated that they already meet the class size guidelines in all grades, having met them in 2004/2005 or earlier. Six believe that they will be able to meet all class size guidelines in the second year of the project (2005/2006) and another six jurisdictions indicated that they will be able to meet the guidelines by the third year (2006/2007). Three jurisdictions reported that they might not be able to meet the third year targets, with one commenting specifically that they might have to take money away from division four to meet K-3 requirements and one indicating that meeting class size targets in K-3 and 7-9 will be problematic. Overall, of those who commented, jurisdictions seem confident in their abilities to meet the class size targets delineated by ACOL.

***How class size funding will be used:***
Jurisdictions were asked to comment on their plans for class size funding for the next three years. Summaries of resultant comments have been tabulated in table 6 below. Most jurisdictions,

(56%) indicated that the funding will be or has been used to hire new teachers. Six others (10%) will use the funding to hire teacher assistants and student supports. Three (5%) rather vaguely indicated that the funding will be used to "lower class sizes". Another three (5%) jurisdictions earmarked their funding for class size related issues, with one indicating that funding will be used to create more space (i.e. by purchasing portables), one saying that funding will be used to eliminate triple-graded combinations in small enrolment sites, and one stating that funding will be used for pressure spots (i.e. classes with 29 students or many high needs students).

The remaining jurisdictions indicated that their funding will be directed to providing additional support to the classroom. The additional supports mentioned included, but were not limited to:

- professional development and inservicing;
- introduction of full-day kindergarten for at-risk students;
- Outreach schools to address low completion rates;
- improvement of technology;
- grid increases and resources for the classroom;
- resources for the libraries and for an electronic library system; and
- new programs of study resources.

***Table 6: Jurisdictions' Plans for Class Size Funding for the Next Three Years***

| Plans for Class Size Funding | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| Funding will be/has been used to hire new teachers | 35 (56%) |
| Funding will be used for teacher assistants and student supports | 6 (10%) |
| Funding will be used to lower class sizes | 3 (5%) |
| Funding will be used for inservicing/teacher training/PD | 2 (3%) |
| Funding will be used to create more space (i.e. portables) | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used to eliminate triple graded combinations in small enrolment sites, ensuring only single or double graded combinations | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used for pressure spots—classes with 29 students or many high needs students | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used to introduce full-day kindergarten for at-risk students | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used to address rural and small school issues identified in the planning process | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used in Outreach schools to address low completion rates | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used to improve technology | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be put toward grid increases, resources for the classroom and priority schools | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used to support the Virtual School that has helped small high schools to get courses and programs they otherwise would not be able to have | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used for classroom related or student oriented activities | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used for priorities identified in the 3YEP | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used to pay off the deficit | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used for resources for the libraries and for an electronic system for the libraries | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be used for new programs of study and resources | 1 (2%) |
| Funding will be divided equally amongst schools | 1 (2%) |

***Class size guideline issues:***
Thirty-one (50%) jurisdictions took the opportunity to identify issues that have arisen, or that they foresee arising, as they attempt to meet class size targets over the course of three years. First and foremost, 16% of jurisdictions are concerned that the class size initiative is creating serious facility issues. Many jurisdictions indicated that they simply do not have the classroom space to accommodate additional classes created as a result of splitting larger classes. Some are looking into acquiring portables, whereas others are at a loss, having used funding to hire new teachers and now not having funds for portable classrooms.

Four (6%) jurisdictions expressed concern about the sustainability of the class size initiative, especially in the face of rising costs and facility pressures. An additional four indicated that, although they believe that they can meet their class size targets, (unexpected) increasing enrolment could set them back.

On an administrative note, two jurisdictions expressed concern that Alberta Education's rule of counting students in multi-grade classrooms within the highest grade classification in that classroom hurts the district's K-3 class size numbers. This was especially mentioned with respect to the 3/4 split that spans divisions. The full list of concerns raised by jurisdictions is detailed in Table 7 below.

***Table 7: Issues Raised with the Class Size Initiative***

| Issues Raised | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| Class size initiative is creating facility issues | 10 (16%) |
| Sustainability (having the resources to sustain) of the class size initiative is a concern | 4 (6%) |
| Increasing enrolment could set us back | 4 (6%) |
| PO&M funding is inadequate and will be more so for more classes with fewer students | 2 (3%) |
| Concern with the rule for counting split classes within the highest grade classification | 2 (3%) |
| An aging teacher force is leading to higher teacher costs | 1 (2%) |
| The number of K-12 schools makes meeting targets difficult | 1 (2%) |
| Heterogeneous student population | 1 (2%) |
| Increasing incidence and severity of special needs students | 1 (2%) |
| Varied developmental needs among schools will pose challenges | 1 (2%) |
| Accounting problem with having to report actual costs rather than the normal practice of average costs, as the provided amount does not specify costs for sickness, PD, teacher leaves or substitutes | 1 (2%) |
| Formula does not function well with very small rural and urban schools | 1 (2%) |
| Division IV will have to realize that their numbers will be larger as it costs more to educate primary students | 1 (2%) |
| K-12 schools under 120 students are a major concern because of dollars lost through the Renewed Funding Framework (RFF) | 1 (2%) |

## Meeting FNMI Needs

Jurisdictions were asked to discuss their plans to meet the needs of FNMI learners and the measures used to gauge improvement in the long-term expected outcomes of the FNMI policy framework. In the main, respondents limited themselves to commenting on the strategies used to address the four goals of the FNMI Education Policy Framework:

- improving FNMI learner success;
- recognizing and increasing parental involvement in education;
- strengthening relationships; and
- professional development.

***Improving FNMI Learner Success***

Overwhelmingly, jurisdictions cited the use of cultural contact people and Aboriginal Liaison Workers as their strategy for improving the success of FNMI learners. These Liaison Workers generally provide assistance to parents and students, who see the Liaison Worker as a safe person to approach, as well as providing language and culture training. Part of their mandate is to increase academic achievement by respecting cultural differences and by helping instructors to understand those differences. Liaison Workers may also assist in designing units and programming. Some jurisdictions view their knowledge of accessing community resource people to be of paramount importance. Pembina Hills Regional Division breaks down the duties performed by the Liaison Worker in the following manner:

60% Act as liaison between school, home and other agencies.
Act as a counseling/mentoring resource to students encountering academic, behavioral or personal difficulties only to the level that training and experience permits.
Act as student advocate.
Monitor student achievement.

20% Work cooperatively with school counselors, administration, family school liaison, teachers and support staff to meet student needs.

10% Be available for collaboration with Aspen Health, Children's Services, Justice/Probation, Family School Liaison Workers, Family & Community Support Services and educational agencies outside the school system.

5% Monitor student attendance and work with students, families and other agencies to ensure that students attend classes regularly.

5% Act as a cultural resource person for students and staff.
Inform staff of Professional Development opportunities.
Inform students of upcoming educational and career opportunities.

Jurisdictions also mentioned the review of achievement data to determine effective instructional methods for FNMI learners as a valuable strategy to increase learner success. On a related note, an equal number of jurisdictions claim to continuously monitor growth and progress in an attempt to bolster success. Other widely-used strategies include tracking attendance, focusing on literacy and numeracy, offering programs tailored to FNMI students (including language instruction), increased identification of FNMI students, school FNMI steering committees and increased numbers of FNMI staff. The most commonly mentioned strategies are detailed in Table 8 below.

*Table 8: Jurisdictions' Strategies to Improve Learner Success*

| Strategies to Improve FNMI Learner Success | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| Employ Aboriginal Liaison Workers | 17 (27%) |
| Review achievement data to determine effective instructional methods for FNMI learners | 10 (16%) |
| Continuously monitor growth and progress | 8 (13%) |
| Track attendance | 8 (13%) |
| Focus on literacy and numeracy | 8 (13%) |
| Tailor programs to FNMI students | 6 (10%) |
| Increase self-identification | 5 (8%) |
| Establish a school FNMI steering committee (school team), with a goal to increase achievement and success | 4 (6%) |
| Increase FNMI staff | 3 (5%) |
| Target Aboriginal students for CTS/RAP/YAP | 3 (5%) |
| Develop culturally relevant, meaningful classroom materials | 2 (3%) |
| Use differentiated learning as a tool for student improvement | 2 (3%) |
| Share strategies that worked between schools in division | 2 (3%) |
| Offer an outreach program | 2 (3%) |

***Recognizing and Increasing Parental Involvement in Education***

Jurisdictions acknowledge that a large number of the Aboriginal parents in their jurisdictions have had negative experiences with formal education in the past. Jurisdictions are therefore attempting to make their schools warm and inviting presences in the communities. As with efforts to improve student success, Aboriginal Liaison Workers are key figures in jurisdictions' efforts to recognize and increase parental involvement in education. They are viewed by parents as safe people to approach and often conduct home visits, phone calls, or meet in places other than schools if parents are not comfortable coming to schools.

Schools also host special events, recognition activities and cultural days throughout the year, in attempts to involve parents and elders. Parents are also asked to be involved is such school activities as dances and field trips. Many jurisdictions have an Aboriginal Parent Council or a Parent Advisory Committee in addition to encouraging parents to serve on school councils as FNMI representatives. Jurisdictions attempt to carefully select principals (and the Liaison worker may be involved in this process) who have an understanding of FNMI needs, and to ensure that the administration is open to discussions with parents/guardians in order to develop a warm and inviting environment that involves parents.

**Table 9: Jurisdictions' Strategies to Increase Parental Involvement**

| Strategies to increase parental involvement in education | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| Employ an Aboriginal Liaison Worker | 12 (19%) |
| Organize Aboriginal Parent Council/Parent Advisory Committee/FNMI steering committee | 7 (11%) |
| Host special activities and special culture days at the school that involve parents and elders | 5 (8%) |
| Carefully screen principals and select leaders to ensure administration is open to discussion with parents | 5 (8%) |
| Encourage parental assistance with dances and field trips | 2 (3%) |

***Strengthening Relationships***

Fifteen jurisdictions (24%) commented on strategies to strengthen relationships. There was little consensus on strategy, although a number of interesting partnerships were suggested. The strengthening of relationships may be an area that jurisdictions could consider when sharing best practices or success stories.

- Meet with the Chief and Councils of the surrounding reserves to speak of education and what is needed for First Nations students that come from their home reserves to the jurisdiction's schools;
- Ensure high FNMI representation on School Boards and Corporate School Board;
- Explore establishing an Outreach School;
- Support the Youth Apprenticeship Program, which is a very successful partnership between schools, educators, students, community groups, businesses and government;
- Use the TransCanada program to provide milk/juice and muffins every morning;
- Explore the possibility of partnerships with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to better support FNMI students;
- Hire local graduates of the Blue Quills College education program;
- Work with friendship centres;
- Work with Aboriginal Head Start Program;
- Work with other school divisions to share Aboriginal Home School Liaison ;
- Partner with the school division for project work and research;
- Increase partnerships with Stoney community agencies;
- Partner with many local organizations, agencies and institutions; and
- Partner with the University to promote job opportunities.

***Professional Development***

The fourth goal of the FNMI Education Policy Framework is professional development. Again, the Liaison Worker, who is available for Aboriginal awareness training, was considered jurisdictions' most important resource for professional development. Other responses detailed the types of professional development training that had either been offered or would soon be offered. Jurisdictions' responses are delineated below in Table 10.

*Table 10: Jurisdictions' strategies for professional development*

| Professional development | Number of Respondents (/62) |
|---|---|
| Liaison Worker is available for Aboriginal awareness training | 6 (10%) |
| Staff receive training in strategies to address FNMI learning and achievement as well as how to respond to cultural realities | 3 (5%) |
| Sessions are offered on Aboriginal awareness and the realities of entering into Aboriginal communities | 2 (3%) |
| Work with college to implement a community-based Northern and Aboriginal Teacher Education Program and Aboriginal Language Instruction Program. | 1 (2%) |
| Offer two day inservices with the Aboriginal Language and Aboriginal studies teachers and teacher aides. | 1 (2%) |
| Offer training to integrate Aboriginal culture, languages and history. | 1 (2%) |
| Offer a session regarding the FNMI School/Community Learning Project. | 1 (2%) |
| Offer a session on FNMI and Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning. | 1 (2%) |
| Feature Aboriginal cultural presenters and speakers at PD days. | 1 (2%) |
| Celebrate Aboriginal Awareness Week, with a focus on student and teacher awareness. | 1 (2%) |
| Increase school board awareness of FNMI perspectives with a presentation, traditional lunch and a dance demonstration | 1 (2%) |
| Offer workshops and sessions to FNMI initiatives employees. | 1 (2%) |
| Hold a conference for FNMI support staff | 1 (2%) |
| Develop a base of teachers who had attended a cultural camp | 1 (2%) |
| Offer an after-school professional development program | 1 (2%) |

## SUPPORT

Jurisdictions were given the opportunity to discuss the support that they have received, or that they would like to receive, from Alberta Education. They were asked to comment on the Renewed Funding Framework (RFF), which was implemented to support schools by allowing school jurisdictions to allocate funds as they choose in order to meet student needs and address local priorities. The RFF obtained mixed reviews from jurisdictions, some welcoming the increased flexibility and some lamenting the increased accountability requirements. Jurisdictions were also given the opportunity to comment on supports that they would like to receive from Alberta Education, as well as detail information that they would like to see shared by other jurisdictions.

### Renewed Funding Framework

Jurisdictions were asked to describe how the implementation of the renewed funding framework (RFF) influenced jurisdictional planning in relation to flexibility, accountability and funding allocations. While jurisdictions' responses fell into these three categories, it remains to be determined whether they actually discussed jurisdictional planning in their responses.

#### *Renewed Funding Framework and Flexibility*

Twenty-eight jurisdictions commented on the amount of flexibility created by the RFF. Of those, fourteen jurisdictions claimed that the RFF has resulted in increased flexibility and, for the most part, this flexibility has been welcomed, although one jurisdiction did comment on the increased accountability that accompanied the flexibility. Ten jurisdictions expressed the view

that, rather than increasing flexibility, the RFF has created less flexibility for jurisdictions, accompanied by more accountability. Four jurisdictions commented that the RFF has not changed the amount of flexibility jurisdictions have in allocating funding. One jurisdiction observed that the actual flexibility gained did not match initial expectations, which caused public relations difficulties for the jurisdiction.

Sixteen jurisdictions commented on what flexibility has, or has not, allowed them to allocate their money to. Ten of those jurisdictions commented that the flexibility has been welcomed and that the money continues to be allocated based on need. Three of those ten jurisdictions claimed that, although there is more flexibility, the division has allocated the money in a similar fashion as it had been allocated in the past because the needs continue to be the same. Other jurisdictions have allocated funding in the following manner:

- FNMI students/schools with large FNMI populations;
- small schools by necessity;
- engagement of additional staff;
- students; and
- creatively addressing the class size initiative.

One jurisdiction commented that because infrastructure funding is tightly controlled, flexibility had been lost in addressing infrastructure needs, and one commented that, although there is more flexibility, class size funding is received as targeted monies.

***Renewed Funding Framework and Accountability***

Twenty-six jurisdictions commented on the amount of accountability created by the RFF. Five jurisdictions simply commented that accountability requirements had increased, but seventeen jurisdictions observed that the current accountability requirements are simply too extensive. The following are concerns that those jurisdictions expressed over the accountability requirements:

- Accountability requirements need to be better coordinated, streamlined, efficient and concise.
- The time and effort required takes time away from focusing on students.
- Having to include all the pre-decided measures makes developing the three year education plan difficult.
- The increased resources going into planning are becoming cumbersome.
- The more "hoops" there are, the greater the risk for reducing the validity and ownership of accountability increases.
- The more complex the accountability requirements become, the more difficult they are to follow.

On the other hand, three jurisdictions commented that the more they (and those in the jurisdiction, such as principals) understand and are aware of the accountability requirements, the easier it becomes to get "on board" with meeting those requirements. One jurisdiction hesitantly stated that the accountability requirements are working well so far, however with many unknowns in the pillar, it is difficult to tell how well they will work in the future.

Jurisdictions also commented on their strategies for ensuring accountability. The following are examples of their responses:

- Accountability is maintained through specific results reporting that includes Ministry requirements but extends to local requirements that have been established to ensure resources are targeted appropriately.
- If services are no longer required, the administration within the jurisdiction discusses

where the "excess funds" should go.

- In the Three Year Education Plan and Annual Education Results Report, the jurisdiction reviews results and reports on AISI, FNMI, Technology and Class Size. Discussion and Analysis precede the reporting. Also reflect on accountability requirements in the School Improvement Plans.
- Accountability is enhanced through student achievement and results.
- Greater emphasis is placed on gathering data and using it to inform decisions.
- The jurisdiction added compliance requirements.

***Renewed Funding Framework and Funding Allocations***

**Process**

Eighteen jurisdictions commented on where funds were allocated and the process used to determine the allocations. An additional five claimed that the RFF has not resulted in much change in allocation because priorities have simply been maintained. Two jurisdictions noted that funding allocations will evolve as priorities are addressed and results are tracked. One noted that there has not yet been a shift in allocation from the jurisdictions to the schools because of the uncertainty that comes with any new project. The following are areas that jurisdictions specifically mentioned allocating funding to:

- FNMI;
- small schools by necessity;
- special needs;
- cost adjustments for SES;
- salaries; and
- having lead teachers in place for literacy and math initiatives.

Three jurisdictions gave slightly more detail on the decision-making process involved in allocating funding, apart from simply stating that funds go to areas of greatest need. The processes are as follows:

- Divisional school based decision-making committee has provided recommendations, which have been adopted by the Board and Principals, for the allocation of funds under the RFF.
- Jurisdiction has a Board/Stakeholder Budget Committee that uses a year-long process to determine funding allocation.
- Jurisdiction superimposed criteria at the district level to maintain degrees of equity for enveloped funds.

**Shortcomings**

Thirteen jurisdictions gave details on areas in which they felt the RFF funding fell short. One jurisdiction simply stated that funding was insufficient and one indicated that final funding levels were less than anticipated. The rest of the jurisdictions were more specific:

- FNMI self-identification could cause funding to disappear or result in much lost funding.
- Formula for funding small high schools needs to be re-examined.
- Concern that the proposed "urban complexity" factor was not implemented and hence that funding was not received by some urban boards.
- Allocation has not taken into consideration the cost of doing business in a hot economy.
- Infrastructure funding is insufficient.

- System administration and board governance allocation is too low to provide the necessary staff and support for the schools.
- Special needs funding is insufficient.
- Funding for sparsity/distance has decreased, which could be a disadvantage over time.

**Recommendations**

Four jurisdictions made the following three recommendations that they believe would improve the RFF.

1) Funding announcements should be timely: In order to develop an effective, comprehensive planning process, jurisdictions need time to develop goals and explore issues. If funding announcements are late, jurisdictions do not have enough time to make any changes.

2) The administration envelope should be separated from the allocation to help clarify central office's budget.

3) A model that distributes funds to schools based on needs rather than a formula would be welcome.

## Desired Support from Alberta Education

Jurisdictions were asked how Alberta Education could support the implementation of their plans. The most common response (25%) was that Alberta Education should have continuity in its support. Other popular responses indicated the need for Alberta Education to provide jurisdictions with more resources or information (20%) and funding (18%), and the desire for Alberta Education to reduce unnecessary processes or details (18%). The most common responses are detailed in Table 11 below.

***Table 11 – Supports from Alberta Education***

| Desired Supports | Number of Jurisdictions (/61*) |
|---|---|
| • Ensure continuity of support | 15 (25%) |
| • Provide jurisdictions with resources/information | 12 (20%) |
| • Provide more funding | 11 (18%) |
| • Reduce unnecessary processes/details | 11 (18%) |
| • Ensure availability of assistance from Alberta Education | 10 (16%) |
| • Establish a more collaborative relationship with jurisdictions | 8 (13%) |
| • Make accommodations for time constraints | 6 (10%) |
| • Describe/vocalize expectations | 5 (8%) |
| • Support for AISI programs | 5 (8%) |
| • Give more support to implement new classroom initiatives | 5 (8%) |
| • Address classroom/building issues | 5 (8%) |
| • Support for SuperNet | 4 (7%) |
| • Facilitate working relationships with other groups | 4 (7%) |
| • Recognize unique needs of jurisdiction | 4 (7%) |

*Because one jurisdiction did not return this question in its responses, the percentages are based on 61 rather than 62 jurisdictions.

***Continuity of Support:*** Jurisdictions commented both generally and specifically on their need for continued support from Alberta Education. Some of the specific areas that jurisdictions cited include:

- keeping the Field Services Zone Liaison Manager in the position for a longer period of time;
- facilitating global licensing for software;
- sustaining Alberta Initiative for School Improvement; and
- reducing class sizes.

***Provide Jurisdictions with Resources/Information:*** Some of the specific resources or information that jurisdictions would like from Alberta Education include:

- regional curriculum updates;
- math/science resources;
- student literacy resources;
- assessment strategies; and
- document translations.

***Reduce Unnecessary Processes/Details:*** Jurisdictions indicated that the current provincial accountability system, with its many surveys, reports and input documents, takes considerable effort.

## Desired Information from Other Jurisdictions

When asked what information they would like to receive from other jurisdictions, the most common requests (18% each) were information on First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) practices or strategies and effective professional/staff development opportunities. The most common responses are listed in Table 12 below.

***Table 12 – Information from Other Jurisdictions***

| Desired Information | Number of Jurisdictions (/60*) |
|---|---|
| • First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) practices/strategies | 11 (18%) |
| • Effective professional/staff development opportunities | 11 (18%) |
| • Information about best practices | 10 (17%) |
| • Approaches to increase student achievement levels | 7 (12%) |
| • Second language programs | 6 (10%) |
| • Information about unique jurisdictional programs | 5 (8%) |
| • Effective practices of small/rural jurisdictions | 4 (7%) |
| • Successful strategies to improve high school completion rates | 4 (7%) |
| • Information about math-related programs/practices | 4 (7%) |
| • AISI programs | 4 (7%) |

*Because two jurisdictions did not return this question in their responses, the percentages are based on 60 rather than 62 jurisdictions.

***First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) practices/strategies:*** Those respondents who commented on specific desired information about FNMI most frequently asked for information on best practices for success (three respondents). They also noted a need for:

- information on how to support a small number of FNMI students in a school;
- new focuses and ideas for operation of FNMI; and
- effective teaching of FNMI students.

***Effective Professional/Staff Development Opportunities:*** Professional development needs listed included:

- arranging for teachers to learn about effective practices;
- establishing Administrative Quality Standard for principals;
- establishing rubrics and exemplars similar to those that teachers receive when marking Provincial Achievement Tests; and
- providing in-service training for Aboriginal Liaison Workers.

***Sharing Information about Best Practices:*** Most respondents who indicated a desire for information about best practices did not give specifics. Those who did mention a specific area touched on topics such as new initiatives; models of research on Leadership Academies; and curriculum.

***Approaches to Increase Student Achievement Levels:*** Most jurisdictions commented on the desire to learn how to increase student achievement in general terms. Two jurisdictions expressed a desire to have information on how to take their students' standards from acceptable to excellent. One jurisdiction asked that Alberta Education tell them which school has the highest Provincial Achievement Test results so that they might visit to see what strategies they are using to achieve these results.

## FINAL FEEDBACK TO THE MINISTRY

In all, 52 jurisdictions (or 84%) provided final feedback to the Ministry. A broad assortment of comments can be summarized into six distinct themes, different aspects of accountability and partnership with the Ministry being the most frequently addressed fields (Table 13).

***Table 13 – Final Feedback to the Ministry***

| Final Feedback | Number of Jurisdictions (/62) |
|---|---|
| • Various aspects of accountability | 31 (50%) |
| • Partnership with the Ministry (supports/suggestions) | 22(35%) |
| • FNMI and other Aboriginal education matters | 7 (11%) |
| • Issues with infrastructure | 7 (11%) |
| • Class size initiative and class size survey | 6 (10%) |
| • Services for children and special education issues | 4 (6%) |

***Partnership with the Ministry*** (various aspects) was referred to by 35% of the jurisdictions.

- The jurisdictions repeatedly expressed appreciation of their "working relationship with the Department," characterizing the partnership as supportive and collaborative as well as systematic and helpful (for example, relationships with the Field Services, Education Managers and the Three Year Plan review).
- The jurisdictions outlined the following needed supports from and suggestions to the Ministry:
  - The Ministry involvement in the analysis of the changing student demographics across the province, and at the local level, could be of assistance to school districts. As the data are collected and reviewed, the implications related to areas such as funding, programming and resource development could be more thoroughly examined.
  - Consider the impact of curriculum changes such as new Social Studies curriculum, second

languages and the daily physical initiative on the jurisdictions (such as., impacts on staffing, professional development and resource allocation).
- Keep a connection between Three Year Education Plan and intent of AISI.
- "Could we have a common school calendar across the province?"
- Clarify giftedness/exceptionality testing. This applies to the accommodation requirements recently released by Learner Assessment Branch (LAB).
- Provide a contact person from LAB to assist principals and teachers with interpreting achievement tests and diploma examination results.
- "Get SuperNet up and running."
- Provide any new information that may arise on teaching with video conferencing equipment.
- Do more celebrating of success, so that efforts are recognized and commitment remains.

- The jurisdictions' feedback attests to the high importance of sharing and exchanging of various types of information and ideas among the Ministry, jurisdictions and communities (See also the following sections on accountability and the Class Size Initiative). The reciprocal information flows would result in identifying current trends in the education system for establishing priorities, setting realistic stages of plan implementation, and enhancing appreciation among the jurisdictions of the practical utilities for the collected data.

***Various aspects of accountability:*** Fifty percent (50%) of the jurisdictions commented on different aspects of the accountability system. Specifically:

- Although appreciating the vitality of Three-year Education Plan and AERR process, ten jurisdictions (16%) considered the accountability (planning and reporting) and data collection requirements to be too extensive, complex and consequently taxing on time and resources, especially in small jurisdictions. There were suggestions to make educations plans less detailed (for example, details on school generated funds) and to perhaps leave some accountability to the local authorities. Questions were asked about the reasons/uses for collection of large volumes of data and some overlaps in data collection (such as similarities between information collected through the Ministry survey and the jurisdiction surveys).

- Jurisdictions pointed out that the addition of a sample Three Year Education Plan to the Guide for School Board Planning and Reporting was helpful in their planning process. However, twelve of them (19%) recommended that the Guide be revised ("in format and organization of content"), simplified and possibly split into two separate Guides – one for the plan and one for the results report. There were repeated suggestions to align/include the Summary and Review Template with the Guide. ("A sequential outline of information [versus web based linkages] that directly correlates with the review form … would be of assistance to jurisdictions in their development of plans").

- Individual questions referred to the following specific accountability measures/definitions:
  - necessity of counting students that had left the jurisdiction in the latter's completion rate statistics; and
  - difficulties of reporting on categories such as ESL, FNMI and Special Education, since the definition of "at risk" students overlaps with these categories.

- There were suggestions to introduce more flexibility and local input to the planning and accountability process, specifically:
  - create conditions for developing a more localized three year education plan;

- involve jurisdictions closely in the design and implementation of initiatives and decision-making on provincial priorities and all stakeholders in on-going discussion and prior input opportunities with respect to policies;
- increase the amount of time between announcements and implementation of initiatives, funding changes/budget updates and changes to the Guide to Plans and Reports.

***FNMI and other Aboriginal education matters*** were addressed by 11% of the jurisdictions.

- FNMI self-identification remains a problem in some jurisdictions. One of the suggestions to improve the outcomes was for Aboriginal Services to provide a one page "key messages" summary to help address questions and increase understanding of FNMI identification. Another suggestion was to not tie self-identification to funding, but rather put an emphasis on its educational purposes.

- While one of the jurisdictions mentioned difficulties in the recruitment of Aboriginal teachers, another one suggested "identify[ing] individuals through a resource list (for background and expertise) in the FNMI area who could be employed by jurisdictions as liaisons." In addition, there was a proposition to share FNMI professional development opportunities and promote tours for better understanding of the culture of reserves and FNMI students.

- Finally, two jurisdictions suggested that "the funding for First Nation band students attending provincial schools [be] addressed in an equitable fashion" and the additional funds for (severe) special needs students under the tuition agreements with First Nations be passed in full to the jurisdictions.

***Issues with infrastructure:*** Eleven percent (11%) of the jurisdictions pointed out the need for improved ("more consultative") and more effective interaction with the Department of Infrastructure. Specific issues mentioned were the need for timely feedback on capital plans and early announcement of approved projects for more effective planning at the jurisdiction level. "Demographics are changing faster than the backlog of announcement and renovations, which creates a huge backlog." A couple of jurisdictions suggested that school infrastructure needs to be handled by the Ministry of Education to keep the "educational perspective."

***Class size initiative and class size survey:*** While the Ministry was complimented for choosing to address the ACOL average class size recommendation "in such a direct way," the jurisdictions stressed the need for continuous clear communication to parents and the public that the Class Size Initiative relates to a *jurisdiction* class size average, rather than individual school average or a grade-by-grade maximum. This information could be delivered through the Ministry website, including a Frequently Asked Questions format and references to current literature. In addition, the jurisdictions mentioned issues associated with the class size survey, such as lack of understanding of why such a great deal of detail is needed (because it is time consuming) and the need for further clarification of how class-size averages are calculated.

***Services for children and special education issues:*** Although raised by a small number of jurisdictions, the following points pertinent to special education and children services are worth noting:

- Non resident (i.e., Home Education) boards need to be made more accountable to the government.
- Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) should continue to bring together coordinated services for children and should be involved directly at the jurisdiction level.

## Appendix 1: Comprehensive List of Required Elements

1) Indicate how information on the plan was or will be communicated to parents and the public.
2) Accountability Statement.

# Goal 1: High Quality Learning Opportunities for All

**Outcome:** The learning system meets the needs of all learners, society and the economy.

3) At least one strategy for this outcome

***Measure Required for this Outcome***

4) Percentages of teachers, parents, students and board members who agree that: students are safe at school, are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others, and are treated fairly in school.

Note: The two measures for the two provincial priorities below also measure this outcome.

**Provincial Priority for Improvement:** Improving learning through effective use of information and communications technology.

5) At least one strategy for this priority.

***Measure Required for this priority:***

6) Percentages of teachers, parents and students satisfied with the opportunity for students to receive a broad program of studies, including fine arts, career, **technology**, health and physical education. **Note:** The technology aspect of this measure is the measure for the priority on effective use of technology. Jurisdictions should note this in their plan.

**Provincial Priority for Improvement:** Improving community satisfaction with education.

7) At least one strategy for this priority.

***Measure Required for this priority:***

8) Percentages of teachers, parents, students and board members satisfied with the overall quality of education in Alberta.

**Outcome:** All Albertans can participate in quality learning.

9) At least one strategy for this outcome.

Note: The measure for the provincial priority below also measures this outcome.

**Priority Area for Improvement:** Improving children's access to services through coordination of services.

10) At least one strategy for this priority.

***Measure Required:***

11) Percentages of teachers, parents, students and board members who agree that services and supports for children at risk are easy to access and timely.

# Goal 2: Excellence in Learner Outcomes

**Outcome:** Learners demonstrate high standards.

12) At least one strategy for this outcome.

***Measures Required for this outcome:***

13) Percentages of students (writers) in grades 3, 6 and 9 who achieved the acceptable

standards and who achieved the standard of excellence on each provincial achievement test.

14) Percentages of students (cohort) in grades 3, 6 and 9 who achieved the acceptable standards and who achieved the standard of excellence on each provincial achievement test.

15) Also include, for both writers and the cohort, the combined results for all subjects and grades. Specifically:

16) For the above, provide in table format the most recent year of jurisdiction and provincial results as well as jurisdiction and provincial targets for each year of the plan. (Examples are provided on pages 8 and 9 of Appendix 9 of the Guide.)

**Note:** The combined result and target (all subjects and grades) is an unweighted average of the results or the targets for acceptable and for excellence for all subjects and grades for a particular year.

17) Percentages of students who achieved the acceptable standard and the percentages who achieved the standard of excellence on diploma examinations (most recent year of jurisdiction and provincial results for each course). Targets not required in the 2004/05-2006/07 plan.

18) Participation rates in diploma examination courses (most recent year of jurisdiction and provincial rates for each course).

19) Percentages of Grade 12 students eligible for Rutherford scholarships (with the most recent year of jurisdiction and provincial results, and jurisdiction and provincial targets for each year of the plan).

20) Strategies, local measures of achievement and one year of results (if available and applicable) of special populations of children/students and for students in alternate delivery methods (as applicable):

- children/students for whom English is a second language, children/students with special needs,
- children/students who are academically at risk,
- home education programs,
- on-line programs, and
- outreach programs.

Note: The three measures for the three provincial priorities below also measure this outcome.

**Provincial Priority for Improvement:** Improving programs and results for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners.

21) At least one strategy for this priority.

22) Local measure for Aboriginal student achievement.

**Provincial Priority for Improvement:** Improving early literacy and numeracy.

23) At least one strategy for this priority.

24) Percentages of students in Grade 3 who achieved the acceptable standard on provincial achievement tests (cohort results) in mathematics and language arts.

**Provincial Priority for Improvement:** Improving secondary student achievement in mathematics.

25) At least one strategy for this priority.

***Measure Required:***

26) Percentages of students in Grade 9 who achieved the acceptable standard on the provincial achievement test in mathematics (cohort results).

**Outcome:** Learners complete programs.

27) At least one strategy for this outcome.

Note: The measure for the provincial priority below also measures this outcome.

**Provincial Priority for Improvement:** Increasing high school completion rates.

28) At least one strategy for this priority.

***Measure Required:***

29) Percentage of students who completed high school within three and five years of entering Grade 10 (with the most recent year of jurisdiction and provincial results, along with jurisdiction and provincial targets for the five-year rate for each year of the plan

**Outcome:** Learners are well prepared for lifelong learning.

30) At least one strategy for this outcome.

***Measure Required:***

31) Percentages of teachers and parents satisfied that high school students demonstrate the knowledge, skills and attitudes for lifelong learning.

**Outcome:** Learners are well prepared for employment

32) At least one strategy for this outcome.

***Measure Required:***

33) Percentages of teachers, parents and board members who agree that students have attitudes that make them successful in the world of work.

**Outcome:** Learners are well prepared for citizenship.

34) At least one strategy for this outcome.

***Measure Required:***

35) Percentages of teachers, parents and board members satisfied that students model the characteristics of active citizenship.

## Goal 3: Highly Responsive and Responsible Jurisdiction

**Outcome:** Improved results through effective working relationships on cross-ministry initiatives and with stakeholders.

36) At least one strategy for this outcome

***Measure Required:***

37) Percentages of teachers, parents and board members satisfied with parental involvement in decisions about their child's education.

**Outcome:** The jurisdiction demonstrates leadership and continuous improvement.

38) At least one strategy for this outcome.

***Measure Required:***

39) Percentages of teachers, parents, and board members surveyed who indicate that their school and schools in their jurisdiction have improved, stayed the same or declined in the last three years.

**Strategies that reflect the implementation of the following enveloped funded initiatives:**

40) AISI

41) Student Health Initiative

42) High Speed Networking

**Strategies to address the following: (pg 10 of the Guide)**

43) Major curriculum changes

44) Support services needs of schools and students (e.g. TA's, teacher librarians, counsellors)

45) In-service and professional development needs of staff.

**Review Committee on Outcomes Board Selected:** ***Specify which goal this is linked to.***

46) Outcome

47) Measure

**Highlights of School Facilities Plans (page 10 of the Guide)**

48) Educational purposes of the projects and benefits to students,

49) How it reflects the jurisdiction's Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP) priorities, formerly Building Quality Restoration Program (BQRP) and three-year capital plan,

50) Where and how the reader can get more detailed information.

**Budget Highlights (page 10 of the Guide)**

51) Board's guiding principles for financial planning.

52) Summarized information for parent and community members, in charts or tables.

53) Where and how the reader can get more detailed information on the board's budget.